Magnetic Catches and Unusual Uses for Spade Bits

by Ellis Walentine

I recall having similar problems fitting some of those plastic-jacketed magnet catches. I just took a spade bit I didn't need and ground the sides until it bored a hole the right diameter. Then I ground the point down until it just barely stuck out past the ends of the flutes.

To accurately drill the holes, I make a drill guide by drilling a hole through a strip of wood, then I rip or plane the edge of the block until the hole is exactly the right distance from the edge. Next, I glue and tack another strip on the edge to act as a fence. Using this jig, you can cut clean holes that are square to the surface and right where you want them. Drill the mating holes by reversing the jig on the mating part.

Spade bits have gotten me out of a lot of jams like that, come to think of it. I must've had a couple dozen custom bits for all kinds of special operations. The beauty is that they're cheap and they're easy to modify.